

Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles

(Pentecost Sunday)

14 / 27 May

Tropar Of Pentecost, Tone 8: Blessed art Thou, O Christ our God, Who hast shown forth the fishermen as supremely wise, by sending down upon them the Holy Spirit, and through them, didst draw the world into Thy net. O Lover of mankind, glory be to Thee.

Kondak Of Pentecost, Tone 8: Once, when He descended and confounded the tongues, the Most High divided the nations; and when He divided the tongues of fire, He called all men into unity; and with one accord we glorify the All-Holy Spirit.



Vespers: Num. 11:16-17, 24-29; Joel 2:23-32; Ezek. 36:24-28

Matins Gospel St John 20: 19-23

EPISTLE - ACTS OF THE APOSTLES - 2: 1-11

When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, people from Crete and Arabs--we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God."

AND THERE APPEARED TO THEM DIVIDED TONGUES AS OF FIRE... AND THEY WERE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

So that by gradual increase ...and progress from glory to glory, the light of the Trinity might shine upon the more illuminated ...for this reason it was, I think, that He gradually came to dwell in the disciples. He measured Himself out to them according to their capacity to receive Him: at the beginning of the gospel, after the Passion, after the Ascension, making perfect their powers, being breathed upon them, and appearing in fiery tongues ...You see lights breaking upon us, gradually, and knowledge of such order of theology, as is better for us to maintain, neither proclaiming things too suddenly nor yet keeping them hidden to the end ...He said that all things should be taught us by the Spirit Himself, made clear at a later time, when such knowledge would be seasonable and capable of being received after our Saviour's restoration; when it would no longer be received with incredulity because of its marvellous character. For what greater thing than this did either He promise, or the Spirit teach ...If He is not to be worshiped, how can He deify me by baptism?... And indeed from the Spirit comes our new birth, and from the new birth our new creation, and from the new creation our deeper knowledge of the dignity of Him from whom it is derived ...Look at these facts: Christ is born; the Spirit is His forerunner. He leads Him up. He works miracles; the Spirit accompanies them. He ascends; the Spirit takes His place.

St. Gregory of Nazianzus. Fifth Theological Oration, 26, 27, 28, 29. B#7, pp. 210 -211.

GOSPEL - ST. JOHN 7:37-52 & 8:12

On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. Therefore many from the crowd, when they heard this saying, said, "Truly this is the Prophet." Others said, "This is the Christ." But some said, "Will the Christ come out of Galilee? Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the seed of David and from the town of Bethlehem, where David was?" So there was a division among the people because of Him. Now some of them wanted to take Him, but no one laid hands on Him. Then the officers came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, "Why have you not brought Him?" The officers answered, "No man ever spoke like this Man!" Then the Pharisees answered them, "Are you also deceived? Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed in Him? But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed." Nicodemus (he who came to Jesus by night, being one of them) said to them, "Does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing?" They answered and said to him, "Are you also from Galilee? Search and look, for no prophet has arisen out of Galilee." Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

IF ANYONE THIRSTS, LET HIM COME TO ME AND DRINK

Those who come to the divine preaching and give heed to the faith must manifest the desire of thirsty men for water, and kindle in themselves a similar longing; so they will be able, very carefully, to retain what is said...For to show that men ought ever to thirst and hunger, He said 'Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness' (Matt.5:6) ... Elsewhere He calls it, 'eternal life,' but here, 'living water.' He calls that 'living' which ever works: for the grace of the Spirit, when It has entered into the mind and has been established, springs up more than any fountain, does not fail, never becomes empty ...He has represented its abundance by the expression 'springing' ...Consider the wisdom of Stephen, the tongue of Peter, the vehemence of Paul: how nothing bore, nothing withstood them, not the anger of multitudes, not the risings up of tyrants, not the plots of the devils, not daily deaths, but as rivers borne along with a great rushing sound, so they went on their way hurrying all things with them ...When He was about to send them (after the crucifixion) He said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit' (c.20:22) ...and then they wrought miracles.

St. John Chrysostom, Homily LI on John VII, 1. 2. B#58, p. 184.

Today we celebrate the great feast of Pentecost. Our Lord, at the time of his Ascension into heaven which we celebrated just 10 days ago, instructed his disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they were filled with power from on high – that is until the coming of the Holy Spirit. The disciples did not wait idly, but during this time devoted themselves to prayer, preparing themselves for this great gift which was about to be bestowed upon them by God. When the day came that the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles and the other followers of Christ, they were gathered together in worship. They heard a sound like the rushing of wind and saw the Spirit descend upon the disciples as tongues of flame. At that moment the power of the Holy Spirit began to manifest itself in the disciples for they all began to glorify God in a multitude of languages showing us from the beginning that the Gospel was for all men and women regardless of nation and culture. This miracle also demonstrated that God would provide the apostles with all that was required – even the ability to speak other languages – in order to spread the Gospel to all nations. All they needed to do was to be willing to follow God and depend upon Him for all things.

This day is also called for us the “birthday of the Church” for it was with the coming of the Holy Spirit that the Apostles and the other believers were united to one another in spirit, becoming an icon of the Holy Trinity. The Godhead is a unity of persons – three persons united in one essence, undivided and yet unconfused. The Church is also a unity of persons – the whole host of believers united by the Holy Spirit into one single entity which is the Church, the Body of Christ. This unity is not merely figurative nor is it simply symbolic, but it is a real union brought about by the action of the Holy Spirit in us. The Head of the Body is our Lord Jesus Christ and we are united to Him as we are united to one another through the Holy Spirit. Through Christ we come into union and communion with God and through the action of the Holy Spirit in us we grow into union and communion with one another. We are not a group of separate individuals drawn together by some common cause or belief, but rather we are a group of persons mystically united to one another and yet remaining distinct and diverse. In this way we all together become the one Body of Christ, the One Church comprised of the choir of the saints and yet indivisible. We see this unity made manifest and actualized in the saints who have gone before us and we who are living now in the world are working to actualize that same unity in our lives through our cooperation with the transforming grace of the Holy Spirit in us.

Today we celebrate the “birthday of the Church” – today we celebrate our union with our Lord Jesus Christ and with one another, a union brought about by the descent of the Holy Spirit first upon the Apostles and through them upon the whole world. It is therefore apparent that we are not saved alone, but we are saved together – together with one another and together with the choir of the saints and of all those believers who have gone before us. For this reason we pray for one another and especially we ask the saints to pray for us – no longer does death separate us, but death is defeated and overcome by the Resurrection of the Lord and within the embrace of the Church we have come into a living unity with the whole choir of saints. Therefore do not delay to help one another for in helping your brother or sister to work out their salvation, you also work out your own salvation. In coming to the aid of one who is weak or ill or despondent, you come to the aid of yourself, for that person is joined to you and their weakness, their pain, their despair is yours. By strengthening them, you yourself are strengthened as well. When you are the one facing difficulty, do not hesitate to reach out to your brothers and sisters in Christ so that they might support you and lift you up. This is the nature of the Church that we work out our salvation together. No one is left alone, no one is abandoned, but we are all joined together in Jesus Christ by the work and transforming grace of the Holy Spirit. Today we celebrate our unity, our one-ness with each other. Today we have become the Church, the Body of Christ, through the descent of the Holy Spirit Who enters into our souls and empowers us to follow Christ as He leads us into His heavenly kingdom.

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**On this Sunday the Kneeling prayers are said at Vespers which follows immediately after the Liturgy -
the three long prayers are:**

The First Prayer: Priest: O Lord most pure, spotless, who art from everlasting, invisible, ineffable, unsearchable, unchanging, unsurpassable, immeasurable, longsuffering, who alone hast immortality; who dwellest in light unapproachable, who hast made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that therein is; who grantest unto all men their petitions before they ask: We pray thee, and beseech thee, O Master who lovest mankind, the Father of our Lord, and God, and Saviour Jesus Christ, who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of Mary the ever-virgin and exceeding-glorious birth-giver of God; who first did teach in words and afterwards did manifest himself in deeds, when he suffered his redeeming Passion; who hast given unto us, thy humble, and sinful, and unworthy servants, a command that we should offer supplications unto thee with bending; of the neck and of the knees, both for our own iniquities and for the ignorances of the people: Do thou, the same all-merciful God who lovest mankind, hear us in that day when we shall call upon thee, and more especially upon this day of Pentecost, whereon, after that our Lord Jesus Christ has ascended up into heaven, and had sat down at the right hand of thee, who art both his God and his Father, he did send down the Holy Spirit upon his holy disciples and apostles: which also did rest upon each one of them, so that they were all filled with its inexhaustible grace, and did declare thy majesty in divers unknown tongues, and did prophesy. Wherefore hearken now to us who pray unto thee, and remember us humble and condemned as we are, and turn again the captivity of our souls, exercising thy loving kindness toward us who now offer up our petitions unto thee. Accept us who fall down before thee, and who cry aloud unto thee, We have sinned! We have cloven unto thee even from our mother's womb: thou art our God. But because we have passed our days in vanity, we have stripped ourselves of thine aid, we have deprived ourselves of every valid defence. But confidently trusting in thy bounties, we call unto thee. Remember not the sins of our youth and our ignorances; and cleanse thou us from our secret sins; and forsake us not in the days of our old age, when our strength faileth us. Even until we return again into the earth, abandon us not, vouchsafe us grace to have recourse unto thee; and receive us, because of thy favour and graciousness. Measure our wickedness according to the measure of thy bounties. Set over against the multitude of our transgressions the abyss of thy compassions. Look down from thy holiness on high, O Lord, upon thy people now present before thee, who await thy rich mercies. Visit us with thy loving-kindness: deliver us from the assaults of the Devil. Establish our life in thy holy and sacred commandments. Commit thy people unto an Angel, a faithful guardian. Gather us all into thy kingdom. Grant pardon unto those who put their trust in thee. Put away from them and from us all sins. Purify us by the operation of thy Holy Spirit; bring to naught the machinations of the enemy against us.

And thereto is added the following Prayer: Blessed art thou, O Lord, Master Almighty, who hast illumined the day with the light of the sun, and hast made bright the night with the brilliant flashes of the lightning; who hast graciously enabled us to pass through the long day, and to draw near to the beginning of the night. Hear our petitions, and the petitions of all thy people, and granting pardon unto us for all our sins, both voluntary and involuntary, accept our evening prayers, and send down the multitude of thy mercy and thy bounties upon thine inheritance. Guard us with thy holy Angels. Arm us with the armour of thy righteousness. Encompass us round about with the ramparts of thy truth. Guard us by thy might. Deliver us from every assault, and from every treacherous plot of the adversary. And grant unto us that this present evening and the approaching night, and all the days of our life, may be perfect, holy, peaceful, sinless, without stumbling, untroubled of dreams; through the prayers of the holy Birth-giver of God, and of all the Saints, who, in all the ages, have been acceptable in thy sight.

The Second Prayer: Priest: O Lord Jesus Christ our God, who hast bestowed upon men thy peace and the gift of the Holy Spirit; who, while thou wast yet with us in the present life, didst give unto thy faithful people an inheritance which shall not be taken from them forever; who this day didst send down thy grace upon thy disciples and apostles, in manner most clear, and didst furnish their lips with fiery tongues; by whom now, we also, together with all mankind, having received, through the hearing of our own ears divine knowledge in our own tongues, have been illumined with the light of the Spirit, and have put away the delusion of darkness by the distribution of the material and visible tongues of fire, as also by the marvellous operation of the same, whereby we have been inspired with faith toward thee, and to glorify thee, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit in one Godhead and might, and have been enlightened with power: Do thou who art the Brightness of the Father, of his Essence and his Nature the Express and Immutable Image, the Fountain of Wisdom and of Grace, open the lips of me, a sinner and teach me in what manner and for what needs I ought to pray; for thou knowest the great multitude of my sins, but thy loving-kindness shall overcome the enormity thereof. For lo! I stand in awe before thee, and have cast into the great deep of thy mercy the despair of my soul. Govern my life, O thou who governest all creation by a word, with the unutterable might of thy wisdom, O tranquil Haven of the storm-tossed; and make known unto me the way in which I should walk. Grant unto my understanding the spirit of thy wisdom, bestowing upon my ignorance the spirit of thy understanding. Overshadow my deeds with the spirit of thy fear, and renew a right spirit within me; and by thy sovereign Spirit make stable the instability of my thoughts. That being daily guided by thy good Spirit in that which is profitable for me, I may be enabled to keep thy statutes, and ever bear in mind thy glorious Coming-again, and those things worthy of torment which I have committed. And give me not over to be led astray by the corrupt pleasures of this present world, but strengthen in me the desire to strive for the treasures to come. For thou hast said, O Master: whatsoever a man shall ask in thy Name, that shall be freely received from thy God and father, who is from everlasting. Wherefore, I, also, a sinner, at this descent of thy Holy Spirit, do entreat thy goodness, that thou wilt grant me whatsoever things I have asked which are unto salvation. Yea, O Lord, the bounteous Giver of every benefit; and the Distributor of blessings,—for its thou who givest most bountifully unto those who ask of thee,—thou art pitiful and gracious, and also wast made a partaker of our flesh, yet without sin, and doest incline thine ear with infinite loving-kindness unto those who bow the knee before thee; who, also, wast made the Propitiation of our sins. Wherefore, O Lord, grant thy bounties unto thy people. Harken unto us from thy holy heaven. Sanctify us by thy saving

might of thy right hand. Cover us with the shelter of thy wings; and despite thou not the work of thy hands. Unto thee alone have we sinned, but thee alone so we serve. We know not to adore a strange god, neither have we stretched out our hands, O Lord, unto any other god. Pardon our iniquities, and accept this our prayer, which we make unto thee on bended knees. Extend unto us all the hand of thine aid. Receive our petitions of all men, as it were incense well-pleasing, acceptable before thine all-blessed kingdom. O Lord, Lord, who deliverest us from all the arrows that fly by day, deliver thou us, also, from all things that infest the darkness. Accept our evening sacrifice, even the lifting-up of our hands. Grant that we may pass through the course of the night without sin, untempted of evil things; and deliver us from every alarm and cowardice that cometh to us from the Devil. Grant unto our souls contrition, and unto our minds anxiety concerning that strict searching out of the thoughts which shall come in the dread and just Day of Judgment. Nail our flesh to the fear of thee, and mortify our earthly members: that, in the quietness of sleep, we may be illuminated by the vision of thy judgments. Remove from us, also, every unseemly imagination and hurtful carnal passion. Raise us up again at the hour of prayer, fortified in the faith, and advancing in thy commandments.

The Third Prayer: Priest: O Fountain, ever-flowing, living, illumining; Power creative, coeternal with the Father, O Christ our God, who hast most excellently fulfilled all the plans for the salvation of mankind; who didst shatter the bonds indestructible of Death, and the bolts of Hell, and didst trample under foot a host of evil spirits; who didst offer thyself a blameless victim for us, giving thine all-holy Body for a sacrifice inviolate, and unassailed of every sin, and who, through that terrible and ineffable act of sacrifice, didst bestow upon us life eternal; who didst descend into Hell, and break the everlasting bars, and show a way up unto those who abode in the lower world; and having enticed, by divinely wise allurements, the origin of mischief and the serpent of the abyss, and bound him with cords of nethermost gloom and fire unquenchable in Tartarus, and confined him in outer darkness, by thine infinite and fettering might, O Wisdom greatly glorified by the Father, thou didst manifest thyself as a mighty helper of the assailed; and didst enlighten those who sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, Do thou, O Lord of the everlasting glory and Son beloved of the Father most high, Light Eternal of Light Eternal, the Sun of Righteousness, hear us, who now make our fervent supplications unto thee, and give rest to the souls of thy servants our fathers and brethren, and other kinsmen after the flesh, and of all of the household of faith, who have fallen asleep, and whom we now call to remembrance. For thou hast power over all things, and in thy hand thou upholdest all the ends of the earth. O Master Almighty, the God of our fathers and Lord of mercy, Creator of the race of mortals and immortals, and of every nature of man; of that which is brought together and is again put asunder; of life and death; of sojourn in the world that now is, and of translation to the world which is to come; thou meetest out the years of life, and appointest the time of death; thou bringest down to Hell, and again raisest up; thou bindest unto impotency and loosest unto power, ordering things present according to their necessity, and appointing things to come as is expedient, quickening with the hope of Resurrection those who were smitten with the sting of death. For thou art, of a truth, the Master of all men, O God our Saviour, the hope of all the ends of the earth, and of those who are afar off upon the sea; Who, on this last, and great, and redeeming day of the Pentecost feast, didst reveal unto us the mystery of the Holy Trinity, one in Essence, coeternal, undivided and unmingled; and didst pour out the indwelling and descent of thy holy and life-giving Spirit, in the form of tongues of fire, upon thy holy apostles; and didst appoint the same to be the heralds of the glad tidings of our holy faith; and didst make them confessors and teachers of the true divine knowledge; who, also, on this all-perfect and saving Feast, art graciously pleased to accept propitiatory prayers for those who are imprisoned in Hell, promising unto us who are held in bondage great hope of release from the vileness that doth hinder us and did hinder them; and that thou will send down thy consolation. Hear us, thy humble ones, who make our supplications unto thee, and give rest to the souls of thy servants who have fallen asleep, in a place of light, a place of verdure, a place of refreshment whence all sickness, sorrow and sighing have fled away: and establish thou their souls in the mansions of the Just; and graciously vouchsafe unto them peace and pardon; for the dead shall not praise thee, O Lord, neither shall they who are in Hell make bold to offer unto thee confession. But we who are living will bless thee, and will pray, and offer unto thee propitiatory prayers and sacrifices for their souls. O God great and eternal, who art holy and lovest mankind; who hast vouchsafed unto us at this present hour to stand before thine ineffable glory, and to sing and to praise thy wonders: Purify us, thine unworthy servants, and grant us grace that, with a contrite heart, and without presumption, we may offer unto thee the Thrice-Holy hymn of praise and thanksgiving for thy great gifts, which thou hast bestowed and always dost bestow upon us. Remember, O Lord, our weakness, and destroy us not in our iniquity, but show great mercy upon our humility; that, fleeing from the darkness of sin, we may walk in the daylight of righteousness; and that, putting on the armour of light, we may remain unassailed by any despiteful attack of the Evil One, and with boldness may glorify in all things thee, the only true God, who also lovest mankind. For thine, O Lord and Creator of all men, is that great and veritable mystery, the dissolution of thy creatures for a season, and thereafter their restoration to wholeness and their rest forever. We acknowledge thy grace in all things; for our coming into this world and our going out of it; for our hopes of resurrection and of the life immortal faithfully pledged unto us through thine unfailing promises, the which we shall receive hereafter in thy Second Coming. For thou art the Chieftain of our Resurrection, and the Judge impartial and gracious to the dead, and the Master and Lord of recompense, who didst become a partaker, on equal terms, of our flesh and blood, because of thine exceeding great condescension; and when, of thine own will, that thou mightest place thyself under temptation, thou didst accept our congenital passions, because of thy compassion, and didst suffer through them, being thyself tempted thereby, thou didst become for us who are tempted the helper which thou thyself hadst promised; and thereby hast thou led us to thy passionlessness. Wherefore, O Master, receive thou our prayers and supplications, and give rest unto the fathers, mothers, children, brothers, and sisters, blood-relations and kinsfolk of each and all of us, and unto all souls which have fallen asleep before us; and establish their spirits in the hope of Resurrection unto life eternal, and inscribe their names in the Book of Life, in the bosom of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, and in the land of the living, in the kingdom of heaven, in the Paradise of sweetness; by thy radiant Angels guiding all into thy holy mansions; raising up with thee, also, our bodies, in that day which thou hast appointed by thy holy and faithful promise. Because there is no death, O Lord, for thy servants when we depart from the body and come unto thee, our God, but a change from things very sorrowful unto things most salutary and most sweet, and unto repose and gladness. If, therefore, we

have in aught transgressed against thee, be merciful unto us and unto them; because there is no one pure from stain in thy sight, even for a single day of his life, save thou alone, who didst manifest thyself sinless upon earth, O our Lord Jesus Christ; through whom also we all trust to receive mercy and the remission of our sins. Wherefore, in that thou art a gracious God and lovest mankind, do thou, both to them and to us, pardon, remit, forgive our sins, both voluntary and involuntary, which we have committed whether wilfully or through ignorance; whether those which are manifest or those which have escaped our notice; whether of deed, or of thought, or of word, whatsoever they may be, in all our acts and lives. And unto the departed also grant thou release and pardon; and bless us who are here present, granting unto us, and to all thy people, a good and peaceful ending, and opening unto us the tenderness of thy mercy and love toward mankind at thy dread and terrible Coming-again; and make us worthy of thy kingdom. O great and most high God, who alone hast immortality, and dwellest in light unapproachable; who hast made all creation in wisdom; who hast divided the light from the darkness, and hast appointed the sun to rule the day, the moon and stars also to rule the night; who hast vouchsafed unto us sinners at this present hour also to come before thy presence with confession, and to offer unto thee our evening sacrifice of praise: Do thou thyself, who lovest mankind, direct our prayer as a censer before thee, and accept it for a savour of sweet incense; and grant that we may pass this present evening and the coming night in peace. Endue us with the armour of light. Deliver us from the terror of the night, and from everything that walketh in darkness; and grant that the sleep, which thou hast appointed for the repose of our weakness, may be free from every imagination of the Devil. Yea, O Master, Bestower of all good things, may we, being moved to compunction upon our beds, call to remembrance thy holy Name in the night season: that, enlightened by meditation on thy statutes, we may rise up in joyfulness of soul to glorify thy goodness, offering up prayers and supplications unto thy tender love for our own sins and for those of all thy people: whom do thou visit in mercy, through the intercessions of the holy Birth-giver of God. For thou art a gracious God, and lovest mankind, and unto thee do we ascribe glory, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now, and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

The Holy Spirit provides every gift: He inspires prophecy, perfects the priesthood, grants wisdom to the illiterate, makes simple fishermen to become wise theologians, and establishes perfect order in the organisation of the Church. Wherefore, O Comforter, equal in nature and majesty with the Father and the Son, glory to You...

In the days of old, pride brought confusion of tongues to the builders of the tower of Babel, but now the diversity of tongues enlightened the minds and gave knowledge for the glory of God. There, God punished infidels for their sin, while here Christ enlightened fishermen through the Spirit; there the confusion of tongues was for the sake of vengeance, while here there was variety so that voices could be joined in unison for the salvation of our souls.

Stichera of Pentecost for Vespers, B#10, pp. 891, 894.

Saints of the Week

Fast Free Week

14 / 27 May — The Holy Martyr Isidore - in the reign of the Emperor Decius, this Isidore was taken by force by soldiers from the island of Chios. He had held the Christian faith from his youth, and had spent his life in fasting, prayer and good works. So when, in the army, he declared himself to be a Christian, the commander took him to task for it, and urged him to deny Christ and offer sacrifice to idols. The saint replied: 'Even if you kill my body, you have no power over my soul. I have the true and living God, Jesus Christ, who lives in me and will be with me at my death; and I am in Him and shall remain in Him, and will not cease to confess His holy name while the spirit is in my body.' The commander ordered that they first beat him with iron flails and then cut out his tongue. But, even without his tongue, Isidore was able to speak, and confessed the name of Christ by the Spirit of God. Meanwhile the punishment of God struck the commander, and he suddenly became mute. The mute commander finally gave the signal to behold Isidore. Isidore rejoiced at this sentence and, praising God, went out to the scaffold, where his head was cut off in the year 251. His friend, Ammon, buried his body and, after that, himself suffered and received the wreath of martyrdom; Our Holy Father Serapion the Sindonite; Blessed Isidore the Fool for Christ.

15 / 28 May — Our Holy Father Pachomius the Great - an Egyptian by birth and was a pagan in his youth. As a soldier, he took part in the Emperor Constantine's war against Maxentius. After that, learning from Christians about the one God and seeing their devout life, Pachomius was baptised and went to the Tabennisiot desert, to the famous ascetic Palamon, with whom he lived in asceticism for ten years. Then an angel appeared to him in the robes of a monk of the Great Habit at the place called Tabennisi and gave him a tablet on which was written the rule of a cenobitic monastery, commanding him to found such a monastery in that place and prophesying to him that many monks would come to it seeking the salvation of their souls. Obeying the angel of God, Pachomius began building many cells, although there was no-one in that place but himself and his brother John. When his brother grumbled at him for doing this unnecessary building, Pachomius simply told him that he was following God's command, without explaining who would live there, or when. But many men soon assembled in that place, moved by the Spirit of God, and began to live in asceticism under the rule that Pachomius had received from the angel. When the number of monks had increased greatly, Pachomius, step by step, founded six further monasteries. The number of his disciples grew to seven thousand. St Antony is regarded as the founder of the eremitic life, and St Pachomius of the monastic, communal life. The humility, love of toil and abstinence of this holy father were and remain a rare example for the imitation of monks. St Pachomius performed innumerable miracles, and also endured innumerable temptations from demons and men. And he served men as both father and brother. He roused many to set out on the way of salvation, and brought many into the way of truth. He was and remains a great light in the Church and a great witness to the truth and righteousness of Christ. He entered peacefully into rest in 346, at the age of sixty. The Church has raised many of his followers to the ranks of the saints:

Theodore, Job, Paphnutius, Pecusius, Athenodorus, Eponichus, Soutus, Psois, Dionysius, Petronius and others; St Achillius, Bishop of Larissa; Our Holy Father Silvanus.

16 / 29 May — Our Holy Father Theodore the Sanctified - he was a disciple of St Pachomius, being born and growing up an unbeliever. Coming to the true Faith as a young man, he was baptised and, having heard of St Pachomius, fled to him in his monastery unknown to his parents. St Pachomius made him a monk and came to love him for his rare zeal and his obedience. When his mother came to fetch him back home, he would not let her see him, but prayed to God to enlighten her with the truth. And indeed, his mother not only did not take her son back home but herself did not return. Seeing a women's monastery, ruled by Pachomius's sister, close by, she entered it and was tonsured. After a certain time, Paphnutius, Theodore's brother, also came to the monastery and was tonsured. It once happened that the Bishop of Panopolis invited Pachomius to build a monastery for the many people who were desirous of the monastic life. Pachomius took Theodore with him, and entrusted to him the duty of building the monastery. Upon Pachomius's death, Theodore became abbot of all Pachomius's monasteries and lived until great old age, guiding a multitude of monks on the way of salvation. He entered peacefully into rest and went to the Kingdom of eternal light in the year 368.

St. Brendan the Voyager, abbot of Clonfert (578) - St. Brendan sailed in skin-covered coracles, from Ireland to Scotland, then to England and Wales. His most famous voyage in search of the promised land, was described in a famous saga known as the 'Navagatio,' which indicates that he reached Greenland or even North America. It is still possible to construct a coracle according to the instructions of the Navagatio, and to sail it from Ireland to Newfoundland. St. Brendan was born near Tralee on the west coast of Ireland, and he was brought up by a saint called Ita, who taught him three things that God truly loves: 'the true faith of a pure heart; the simple religious life, and bountifulness inspired by Christian charity.' (She added three things that God hates: 'a scowling face; obstinate wrong-doing; and too much confidence in money'.) He founded several monasteries the most renowned being at Clonfert, a centre famous for missionary work, where he is said to have directed three thousand monks.; The Blessed Maiden Musa; St Nicolas Mysticus, Patriarch of Constantinople; The Holy New Martyr Nicolas; Our Holy Fathers martyred at St Sava's.

17 / 30 May — The Holy Apostle Andronicus - One of the Seventy, he was a kinsman of the Apostle Paul, as Paul wrote (Rom. 16:17), remembering also St Junia, Andronicus's helper. Andronicus was made Bishop of Pannonia, and did not stay in one place, but preached the Gospel throughout the whole of Pannonia. With St Junia, he was successful in bringing many to Christ and in demolishing many temples of idolatry. Both of them had the grace of wonder-working, by which they drove out demons and healed every sort of sickness and disease. They both suffered for Christ, and thus received a twofold crown: of apostleship and of martyrdom. Their holy relics were found in the excavations in Eugenius; The Holy Martyr Solochon; St Stephen, Patriarch of Constantinople;

St. Melangell, virgin hermitress of Wales - Imagine a party of huntsmen in the thick, green undergrowth of a small, wooded valley. The dogs are barking as they begin to follow the scent of a hare. One of the huntsmen sounds the horn. Riding at the front is the local prince. The time is 607 A.D. The place is the Pennant Valley in the kingdom of Powys, in central Wales. The hare disappears into a huge thicket of undergrowth, and the hunters prepare to follow. Then suddenly strange things begin to happen. The dogs turn back in fear. The huntsman with the horn finds he cannot sound a blast, yet he cannot take the horn from his lips. The prince, brave and proud, leaps from his horse. He will not show fear in the face of magic. He draws his sword and begins to cut his way through the brambles and shrubs. In a circular clearing in the centre of the thicket stands a young woman. She is dressed very simply. She stands calmly, radiating a sense of peace. At her feet the hare has crouched down for safety. Prince Brochwel of Powys has just come face to face with Melangell, the daughter of an Irish warrior. Melangell refused a pre-arranged marriage to an old warrior chieftain. She fled to Wales and began a life of prayer, living in a cave on the side of the Pennant Valley. As she was drawn deeper into the spiritual life, animals began to come to her in complete trust. Around her the world was restored to Paradise. Prince Brochwel granted her the valley as a place of prayer and refuge for ever. Gradually a small convent grew up, and a church was built. When Melangell died, the nuns placed her body within the church. The holy woman came to be known as a saint. No one knows how long the convent lasted, but archaeologists have shown that nuns were still being buried outside the church in the 9th and 10th Century. Around 1160 A.D. a new stone church was built, with a shrine where people could come to venerate the bones of Saint Melangell. Pilgrims began to arrive, and miracles of healing took place. The valley was noted as a place of peace, a sanctuary for hares, a comfort to the sick, a glimpse of heaven. Then came the upheavals and pain of the Reformation. The shrine was desecrated, and chunks of masonry from the shrine were hurled out of the church. Often the relics of saints were destroyed at this time by the reformers, but Saint Melangell was reburied in the floor of the church. Pilgrims were no longer encouraged to make the long journey into the Welsh mountains to visit this holy place. Centuries passed, and times changed. Hardly anyone lived near the tiny church in the hidden valley. The few local sheep farmers could not afford to repair the building. By the 1980's the church was almost derelict. Then in 1988 work began to restore the church and shrine of Saint Melangell. Many parts of the ancient shrine were found built into walls, or on neighbouring farms. New masonry was carved to match the old stonework. Today, the church and shrine are beautiful once more. Hundreds of pilgrims flock to pray there and to ask for the prayers of the early Celtic holy woman. A centre for healing and rest has been established a few yards from the church, so that Saint Melangell's work may continue.

18 / 31 May — The Holy Martyr Theodotus, and the seven maiden martyrs: Tecusa, Alexandra, Claudia, Favina, Euphrasia, Matrona and Julia. Theodotus was a married man and an innkeeper in Ancyra in the time of the Emperor Diocletian. Although he was married, he lived according to the words of the Apostle: 'Let them who have wives be as though they had not' (I Cor. 7:29). But he kept the inn on, in order to be able unsuspectedly to help Christians, and his inn was a refuge for persecuted Christians. Theodotus secretly sent help to the Christian refugees in the mountains, and secretly gathered the bodies of those who had been killed, giving them burial. At that time, seven maidens were taken for trial and

tortured for Christ. They were tortured, mocked and then thrown into a lake. One of them, St Tecusa, appeared to St Theodotus and told him to take her body out of the lake and bury it. Under cover of night, Theodotus set off with a companion to carry out the martyr's wishes, and, led by an angel of God, succeeded in finding all seven bodies and burying them. But this friend betrayed him to the authorities and the judge put him to harsh torture. Theodotus endured all the tortures as though not in his own body, having his whole mind steeped in God. When the torturers had made his body one great wound and broken his teeth with stones, it was ordered that he be beheaded. When he was taken to the scaffold, many Christians wept for him, but St Theodotus said to them: 'Don't weep for me, my brethren, but glorify our Lord Jesus Christ, by whose aid I am finishing my course and overcoming the enemy.' Saying this, he laid his head on the block under the sword and was beheaded, in the year 303. A priest buried the martyr's body on a hill outside the city and a church dedicated to St Theodotus was later built on the site; The Holy Martyrs Peter, Dionysius, Andrew, Paul and Christina; The Holy Martyrs Heraclius, Paulinus and Benedimus.

19 May / 1 June — The Hieromartyr Patrick, Bishop of Brussa with three priests: Acacius, Menander and Polyenus - they suffered for the Christian faith in the time of Julian the Apostate in Asian Brussa. The imperial governor, Junius, brought Patrick to a hot water spring and asked him: 'Who created this healing water, if not our gods, Aesculapius and the others, whom we worship?' St Patrick answered: 'Your gods are demons; and this water, like all other water, was created by Christ, our Lord and God.' Then the governor asked: 'And will this Christ of yours save you if I throw you into this boiling water?' The saint replied: 'If He wills, He can keep me whole and uninjured, although I would wish, in this water, to be parted from this temporal life, that I may live eternally with Christ; but let His holy will be done, without which not a hair of a man's head can fall.' Hearing this, the governor ordered that Patrick be thrown into the water. The boiling drops fell on all sides, and scalded many of the onlookers, but the saint remained untouched, as though he were standing in cold water. Seeing this, the governor was wild with shame and commanded that Patrick and three of his priests be beheaded with axes. So these goodly followers of Christ said their prayers and laid their heads under the executioner's axe. When they had been beheaded, their souls were taken merrily to Christ's Kingdom of light, to reign eternally. St John, Bishop of the Goths; The Holy Prince Ivan of Vologda. **St. Dunstan, archbishop of Canterbury (988)** - nephew of the Archbishop of Canterbury, spent a privileged youth at the court of King Athelstan and eventually became abbot of Glastonbury. English monastic life had almost totally disappeared as a result of the Viking invasions. Dunstan set about vigorously reviving it. He founded monasteries at Bath, Exeter, Malmesbury, and elsewhere, drawing up new rules for their good order. He installed monks in Winchester, in Chertsey, Surrey, and Milton Abbas, Dorset and restored the old abbey of Abingdon. After a period of exile King Edgar recalled him to be Archbishop of Canterbury in the year 960. There he founded an abbey to the east of the city, along with three churches dedicated to St Mary, Saints Peter and Paul, and St Pancras. As a skilled metalworker, scribe and bell-founder himself, he stimulated the revival of church art and illuminated manuscripts. He also loved to play the harp and wrote several fine hymns

20 May / 2 June — The Holy Martyr Thaleleus - born in Lebanon, his father's name being Berucius and his mother's Romylia, he was an eighteen-year-old youth, handsome and well-grown and with ginger hair. A doctor by profession, he suffered for Christ in the reign of Numerian. When he courageously confessed his faith in Christ the Lord before the judge, the latter commanded the two executioners, Alexander and Asterius, to bore through his knees, pass a rope through the pierced bone and hang him from a tree. But the executioners, as though the unseen power of God had deprived them of sight, bored through a plank and hung it on the tree. When the judge discovered this, he thought that the executioners had done it deliberately, and ordered that they be flogged. Then Alexander and Asterius cried out under the flogging: 'The Lord is alive to us; from now on, we are become Christians. We believe in Christ, and suffer for Him.' Hearing this, the judge ordered that they be beheaded. Then the judge took the awl, to bore through Thaleleus's knees himself, but his hand was paralysed and he had to ask Thaleleus to heal him, which the kindly martyr, with Christ's aid, did by his prayers. Then he was thrown into water, but showed himself alive to the judge (for Thaleleus was praying within himself that God would not have him die at once, but would let his tortures continue). When he was thrown to the wild beasts, they licked his feet and rubbed tamely round him. He was finally beheaded and entered into eternal life in 284

The Holy Martyr Asclas - Asclas suffered in the town of Antioch in Egypt during the reign of Diocletian. He was flogged, scraped, burned with candles but he remained unwavering in the Faith to the end. When the tormentor Arrian was crossing the Nile by boat Asclas, through prayer, stopped the boat in the middle of the river and would not allow it to move until Arrian wrote that he believes in Christ as the One and Almighty God. But, ascribing this miracle to a magical skill of Asclas, the tormentor forgot what he wrote and continued to torment the man of God. Finally, they tied a stone around his neck and tossed him into the Nile river. On the third day Christians found the body of Asclas along the shore with the stone around his neck (as the martyr foretold them before his death) and honourably buried him in the year 287 A.D. Leonides, the holy martyr, also suffered with him. Arrian, their tormentor, later repented, believed in Christ with his whole heart and openly began to express his faith before the pagans. The pagans also killed him and so Arrian, a one-time tormentor of Christians, was made worthy of the martyr's wreath for Christ; Our Holy Father Stephen of Piperi; St. Ethelbert, king and martyr (c793)